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A promise not fulfilled: The (non) implementation of the resilience turn in EU peacebuilding

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Abstract

The article provides a critical overview of the rise of resilience at the European Union (EU) level and to what extent its adoption is reshaping the terms of the EU's peacebuilding interventions. In reaction to the perceived shortcomings of the "liberal peace" approach, international actors, including the EU, are now describing their interventions through a new resilience discourse. The article argues that resilience offers a four-fold contribution to promoting sustainable peace: 1) a focus on complexity; 2) a systems approach; 3) a shift toward local capacities; and 4) an emphasis on human agency. It then applies this framework to assess the implementation of the EU's "resilience turn" since the adoption of the EU Global Strategy in 2016. Focusing on the EU's discourse and its peacebuilding practices in

the Western Balkans, the evidence suggests that the EU has only embraced a systems/integrated approach, while neglecting deeper understandings of complexity, local capacities and human agency. As a result, the contribution of resilience to EU peacebuilding remains limited.

Keywords: European Union; peacebuilding; resilience; integrated approach; Western Balkans; Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Jonathan Joseph is Professor of International Relations at the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol. His current research looks at the role of the EU in promoting resilience across different policy areas such as development, humanitarian intervention, infrastructure protection, and security policy. These are compared with resilience policies in the UK, US, France and Germany and considered through the conceptual lens of governmentality. His most recent books are *Varieties of Resilience: Studies in Governmentality* (Cambridge 2018) and *Wellbeing, Resilience and Sustainability: The New Trinity of Governance* (with Allister McGregor, Palgrave 2019).

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Resilience has emerged as a main theme of intervention in several policy fields, including most aspects of civil protection, counter-terrorism and disaster risk reduction. It has also emerged as a development strategy tool as pursued by the main international organizations and aid agencies. Indeed, it is said to provide a bridge between different policy areas, notably short-term humanitarian intervention and longer-term development strategy. By contrast, the role of resilience in peacebuilding strategies has yet to be fully developed as international organizations are only just starting to formulate ideas in this field--see, for example the recent United Nations (UN) approach to "sustaining peace" (United Nations General Assembly, 2016; United Nations Security Council, 2016). This article looks at how these arguments are starting to emerge at the European Union (EU) level, seeking to identify what might be distinctive about the resilience approach and the extent to which this is realized in EU practice. Thus, the article examines what difference resilience makes in terms of peacebuilding implementation compared to previous concepts. In order to explore this question, this article first identifies what is novel about this approach, it examines whether this has been captured by the EU's discourse on resilience, before analyzing its implementation both in Brussels and in recent EU practices in the Western Balkans. We question what resilience is being used for by examining these discourses *and* practices, both in relation to current global trends and in relation to the EU's own specific ideas, interests and challenges.

To assess the embrace of resilience in EU peacebuilding initiatives, the article employs a framework that highlights four key features of resilience that we feel make it most attractive to those seeking sustainable peace. These four features are: 1) a focus on complexity; 2) the way resilience advocates a systems approach; 3) how resilience reinforces the shift towards local capacities; and 4) an emphasis on human agency. Following this, we use the above four features of resilience as yardsticks to assess the EU's implementation of the resilience turn in two steps. First, we turn to the EU's discourses to look at how the EU has adopted the resilience turn at the Brussels level, focusing on the implementation of the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) (European External Action Service, 2016) and the *Joint Communication on A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action* of 2017 (European Commission &

High Representative, 2017). Second, we look at the EU's track record in the Western Balkans which brings in the EUGS and the EU's enlargement policy.

Looking at EU practices in the Western Balkans, and specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina (thereafter Bosnia), we find that out of the four elements identified above, the EU has prioritized the implementation of a systems approach at the expense of the other three elements. Thus, the development of an integrated approach--a more coordinated strategy in relation to conflicts and crises -- has become the *sine qua non* of a resilience turn in EU peacebuilding. Thus, in the Balkans and elsewhere in the neighbourhood, the EU has translated resilience into something consistent with the EU's interests rather than something that might be in the interests of effective peacebuilding (see also Korosteleva, 2019; Petrova & Delcour, 2019). By contrast, and despite the rhetoric contained in EU policy documents, embracing complexity and non-linearity, promoting local ownership, and focusing on individual local agency seem to have dropped out of the picture when it comes to implementation. In sum, while the literature on resilience makes the case for a distinctive approach that might offer peacebuilders new tools for dealing with the four key features of resilience, we find that the EU's practice remains fairly consistent with long-standing EU approaches and interests.

The promise of resilience in peacebuilding

While resilience is well established in climate change and disaster risk reduction initiatives, humanitarian intervention and development strategies (see Korosteleva & Flockhart, in press), it has not yet played such a key role in the development of peacebuilding perspectives. In the UN context, resilience has only recently been incorporated into discussions about "sustaining peace" (United Nations General Assembly, 2016; United Nations Security Council, 2016). Drawing on the systems ecology literature (Holling, 1973), resilience can be seen as the ability of individuals or a community to cope with or adapt to violent conflicts in order to foster a more sustainable peace. This definition also fits well with the policy and scholarly shift toward the "local," and with "hybrid" or "pragmatic" approaches to promoting peace (de Coning, 2018; Mac

Ginty, 2014; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Based on ecological understandings of resilience, we argue that this concept can appear to be attractive to policy makers as they develop the EU's position on sustainable peace: 1) because of its focus on complexity; 2) by advocating a systems approach; 3) by supporting the shift towards local capacities; and 4) by placing emphasis on human agency.

We start with complexity because it is probably the most distinctive feature of a resilience approach. Complexity thinking is attractive to peacebuilding because it sees people as embedded within complex social relations, while social processes are seen as non-linear with no straightforward causes or outcomes (Chandler, 2014). This idea also reinforces the current narrative that established liberal approaches to peacebuilding have failed and that we need to radically rethink how we intervene into complex social and political environments (Joseph, 2016). Societies are seen as in a constant state of flux--something that is intended as a general claim about contemporary social life, but which clearly has an added relevance for conflict-prone societies (United States Institute of Peace, n.d.). The hubris of liberal peace is thrown into doubt by the suggestion that there are no clear or predictable outcomes, no clearly identifiable patterns or processes, no clear causes of crises or readily identifiable solutions (see also Bargués-Pedreny, 2019). It is this understanding of complexity that gives resilience its novelty. However, because complexity is ambiguous in meaning, the EU's understanding is allowed to slip back into more mundane arguments about multiple actors and competing agendas.

For resilience scholars, complexity forces us to rethink how we live with uncertainty and crises (Chandler, 2014). In contrast to previous understandings of peacebuilding, complexity forces us to think about how we deal with problems that cannot fully be resolved or which may have no endpoint (de Coning, 2018). Complexity provides the ontological ground for the normalization of crises and conflicts (Evans & Reid, 2014). Into this situation, resilience emerges as not only the best way to cope with such conditions, but actually as a positive, self-enabling response to such challenges. Transformative understandings of resilience see crises as an opportunity to reorganize. Embracing increasing diversity, flexibility and adaptability among conflict-affected

communities can be seen as the best way of responding to shocks and stresses (Van Metre & Calder, 2016). Showing some skepticism toward more statistical and predictive accounts of social behavior, resilience embraces a more ecological view of adaptive life that embraces uncertainty, surprise, and contingency (Duffield, 2011, p. 130).

Resilience approaches promote the idea of complex adaptive systems. Gunderson and Holling (2002) use the term panarchy to indicate the "multiple scales of space, time and social organisation" (Welsh, 2014, p. 17) forming a system that is self-organizing but with complex, non-linear outcomes and effects. In human terms, this means viewing social communities in terms of formal and informal networks that may provide the resources for and enhance the capabilities of resilient individuals (Menkhaus, 2013). The key ways that this might be done are through developing adaptive capacities and social learning (Berkes & Ross 2013). With the notion of complexity in the background, the resilience approach allows us to question the idea of a standard practice for international interventions, while maintaining the belief that we can improve our understanding of how to deal with complex situations.

A second way that resilience relates to peacekeeping is through its advocacy of a systemic approach--although we will see that there are significant contradictions in this argument. Nonetheless, the argument for a systemic approach is significant and comes from the influential arguments for resilience within the ecology literature of the 1970s. This began with Holling's (1973) definition of ecological resilience as a "measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables" (p. 14). This challenges the idea of complex systems returning to the same state of equilibrium and later approaches would place greater emphasis on ideas like self-organization, functional diversity, and non-linearity (Gunderson, Holling, Pritchard, & Peterson, 2002, p. 530). This systemic approach requires bringing together and coordinating different actors and instruments in order to address multi-level and multi-causal processes. Hence, while the previous peacebuilding scholarship had already advanced a systemic approach where peacebuilding activities need to be understood as being part of larger systems (Lederach,

1997), the resilience approach relates this to the conditions of complexity outlined above. However, in the peacebuilding jargon, such a systemic approach has been translated into integrated, comprehensive, or whole-of-government approaches as illustrated by the cases of the EU, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the UN (Faleg, 2018). We will argue here that this becomes the main reason for why resilience is attractive to the EU, so much so that an "integrated approach" threatens to undermine other distinctive elements of resilience in EU peacebuilding.

The third argument for resilience is that it is consistent with peacebuilding's "local turn" and bottom-up approach as well as arguments for hybridity and a focus on the everyday (see Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, Korosteleva, 2019; Petrova & Delcour, 2019). This should be considered as a reaction to the perceived failure of liberal peace and large-scale interventions focused on externally-driven institution building (Haldrup & Rosén, 2013; Juncos, 2017). Indeed, this failure is almost celebrated as freeing intervention from the hubris of liberal universalism and opening our eyes to the contributions of different cultures and identities (Bargués-Pedreny, 2015). Resilience promotes the idea of locally-owned capacities and capabilities and supports the turn away from large-scale external statebuilding projects. The role of international organizations should be to facilitate the peace process, thus supporting the argument, influenced by Foucault, that contemporary forms of governance seek to manage populations "from a distance," while promoting self-governance and "care for the self" wherever possible (Joseph, 2013).

Local communities are the focal point of resilience, something consistent with arguments about social capital and local networks. Such arguments show how resilience appears to be offering peacebuilding something new, yet actually something quite familiar. It also carries over into arguments about empowering local actors, supporting local networks, making use of local resources and sharing local knowledge (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). It tries to bridge short-term and long-term peacebuilding objectives while also supporting hybrid solutions and transitional justice. There is a double attraction in this approach. First, it turns the international community away from the

responsibility for large scale intervention, placing the responsibility for resilience on local communities themselves. This is attractive in an age of austerity and it also fits with the view that liberal peace has failed, large-scale institution building does not work and that the conditions of complexity, as described above, make rational planning and institution building a thing of the past. Second, it places responsibility on the local population in such a way as to appear positive and enabling (Joseph, 2016). Instead of emphasizing weakness, failure, and fragility, a resilience-building approach highlights the powers of human agency as discussed below. It also strengthens the cultural turn in peacebuilding—"enhancing resilience thus can be interpreted as a strategy that takes a constructivist interpretation of culture as a resource to be used positively in an endogenous peace-building process, respectful of pluralism" (Bargués-Pedreny 2015, p. 121). In this way resilience, continues previous discourses of human security and local ownership while offering a bit more nuance and some caution in relation to local capacities, promoting these, while emphasizing the need to be more pragmatic and adaptable in the face of complex challenges.

Fourthly, resilience offers a more human-centered perspective. This should not be seen in isolation, but alongside some of the changes mentioned above—the local, the everyday, and the hybrid (Chandler, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2014). Instead, like Sen's capabilities approach to development or the rise of the wellbeing agenda, this is a more individualistic approach to human security and development that goes directly to the people rather than their institutions and which promotes the idea of human capital, capabilities and capacities. Translated into the language of peacebuilding, Chandler (2015) writes of "the internal capacity of societies to cope with crises, with the emphasis on the development of self-organisation and internal capacities and capabilities rather than the external provision of aid, resources or policy solutions" (p. 13).

This has been noted in discussions about the use of resilience by international organizations. Haldrup and Rosén (2013) mention that capacity building initiatives now focus on the individual, rather than the institution while Van Metre and Calder (2016, p. 20) talk of the "heuristic shift" to local agency. The capacities of local people are

rediscovered, their networks, social ties, knowledge and resources now become a source of resilience (United States Institute of Peace, n.d.). And if this is not sufficient, individuals and communities have the ability to adapt and learn from shocks and crises. For Adger (2000, p. 361), community resilience develops the qualities of awareness, coping strategies, social learning and innovation. For Menkhaus (2013, p. 6) the qualities of resilience are deeply embedded and involve common interests, shared narratives and patterns of trust, with local leaders prepared to take risks for peace. Resilience approaches to peacebuilding thus need to tap into these internal capacities and the critical agency of the local (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2013). This gives some indication of the possibilities that a human turn might possess, but this must be tempered by our understanding of the individualistic interpretation that often gets applied to human agency by international organizations.

Having outlined four reasons why resilience appears attractive to peacebuilders we now turn to the EU's recent emphasis on resilience to determine the extent to which the EU has embraced these four elements of resilience at the level of policy (in Brussels) and its implementation on the ground (in the Western Balkans). We argue that although the most distinctive elements of resilience are the focus on complexity and complex systems, the implementation of this approach by the EU has mainly focused on the EU's own problems of systemic coordination.

The resilience "turn" and the implementation of the EU Global Strategy

Drawing on an analysis of key EU documents and interviews with EU officials in Brussels,¹ this section seeks to determine what difference resilience makes in terms of peacebuilding implementation compared to previous approaches. Both the EUGS (European External Action Services, 2016) and the new *EU Joint Communication on Resilience* (European Commission & High Representative, 2017) identify resilience as

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This section draws on nine interviews with diplomats and officials from the European Commission (Directorates-General ECHO and DEVCO), European External Action Service, and EU Delegations conducted in September 2017 and January 2018. Interviews are coded to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees.

one of the key priorities for the EU's external action. Resilience in EU foreign policy has been lauded as a new paradigm, which might radically transform this policy area (Juncos, 2017; Tonra, 2018; Korosteleva, 2019). Yet, recent arguments for resilience rely on understandings of resilience work that the EU has been doing for some time (interview #21, 23, 24). Indeed, the main EU definition of resilience remains the one provided in 2012 as "the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks" (European Commission, 2012, p. 5). Thus, for all the discussion about complexity, social construction, culture, and the human found in the scholarly literature, actual EU policy has lagged behind as discussed below.

The holy grail: An integrated approach to conflicts and crises

Our evidence suggests that when it comes to how the EU understands resilience in peacebuilding, fostering an integrated EU external action is considered to be by far the main added value of this approach. According to an European External Action Service (EEAS) official, resilience-building is about "taking a systems approach" (#22; see also #27, 28, 29). The prioritizing of an integrated approach is consistent with the EU's longstanding focus on developing a coherent and comprehensive external action. It is also justified on the basis of increasing complexity. For instance, it is argued that "the integrated approach captures the multiple ways – in time, space and policy sectors – in which the EU can tackle operationally the complexity of conflicts to promote human security" (European External Action Service, 2019, p. 22). Yet, the prioritization of the integrated approach has more to do with the EU's own anxieties as an international actor (Joseph & Juncos, 2019) than with the aims of peacebuilding per se. Thus, the EUGS speaks of the need to adopt a multidimensional, multiphased, multilevel, and multilateral approach (High Representative, 2016; see also European Commission & High Representative, 2017). According to a Commission official (#26), "the new [resilience] approach builds on all the existing tools, so this is why we emphasize the integrated approach, while respecting the different mandates of the different actors, and in particular, for ECHO the humanitarian principles."

Nevertheless, clear and significant divisions within the EU do exist and the resilience turn should be seen in relation to these. That it offers a comprehensive or integrated approach suggests that EU policy is not comprehensive or integrated enough, which in turn points to the issue of whether resilience is an approach that recognizes, reflects, or indeed, exacerbates, such divisions. In a positive sense, resilience might be said to help the EU bridge humanitarian, developmental, security, economic, and environmental approaches, moving a field like peacebuilding from a series of one-off, technical, and project-driven interventions to a more systemic approach that tries to address the root causes of conflicts. For instance, the *Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus* of May 19, 2017 thus urge the European Commission and the member states to foster such an approach in a number of pilot countries (Chad, Nigeria, Sudan, Iraq, Myanmar, and Uganda), with a view to put in place joint analysis and where possible, joint planning and programming. More recently, Directorates-General DEVCO and ECHO have led the work on Joint Humanitarian and Development Frameworks (JHDF) as a basis for joint humanitarian and development planning and programming (see Anholt & Sinatti, in press).

However, it is also easy to see how this can exacerbate already existing divisions between different EU actors since this might confuse the relationship between different departments such as ECHO and DEVCO as well as the EEAS. These have their own strategic interests linked to institutional incentives, bureaucratic conditioning, and role identities. When reflecting on the implementation of the new resilience "turn," an EU official (#23) explained that

We have made progress linking humanitarian aid and development programmes, in particular, in declarations and policies (development-security nexus, etc.). However, in practice, there have been less progress. This is particularly the case when it comes to bringing in and cooperating with diplomatic and security actors.

The same official (#23) noted that there has been some resistance to cooperation in the past from development actors regarding the launch of certain projects in the context of an ongoing conflict. Other officials were more optimistic about the prospects of cooperation between humanitarian and development actors on the implementation of a resilience approach (interviews #28, 29). For instance, one official (#28) mentioned that

in pilot countries, we are more systematically getting together to get a common understanding, to identify common objectives and to see whether we can work together and to be more complementary in our programming [...] A lot of good positive developments, with some difficulties here and there, but a lot of efforts from all sides to work together and avoid silo approaches.

Complexity and principled pragmatism

Turning to another interrelated component of resilience, that of complexity, there is some evidence at the policy level of an increasing commitment on the part of the EU to foster such an approach, but here the picture is more mixed. In fact, the EU uses a very limited conception of complexity that says little about such things as systemic complexity, panarchy, or non-linearity and essentially boils down to the view that there are multiple actors in multiple contexts. The EUGS is justified on the basis that the EU operates in a more complex world, a more connected world, and a more contested world (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 11). This then supports the more realist argument that the EU will be guided by clear principles that "stem as much from a realistic assessment of the current strategic environment as from an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world" (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 11; see also Tocci, 2019). According to one official this means that "the normative approach is seen more critically" (#22). In other words, while in the past "we were supposed to transform/shape the outside world. There was also this idea of promoting values. Now we say that we also need to promote our interests" (#22).

Yet, the addition of principled pragmatism somewhat complicates our understanding of the EU's approach to peacebuilding since the EU's turn to resilience while occasionally embracing the ideas of systemic complexity and non-linearity, generally undermines these notions by pursuing a return to the more comforting teleological notions of the liberal peace. In this regard, resilience features "democracy, trust in institutions and sustainable development" (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 24) as its key long term goals. This is particular so in relation to the EU's self-conception as a normative power, something that is surely at odds with the pragmatism of much resilience discourse (Juncos, 2017). While the EUGS might recognize that other non-liberal "paths" are possible (European External Action Service, 2016, pp. 25-26), the Joint Communication explicitly states that "[t]his work will be grounded in the EU's commitment to democracy and human and fundamental rights" (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, p. 4) and it goes on to identify certain core liberal values like "respect for democracy, rule of law, human and fundamental rights and ...inclusive long-term security and progress" (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, p. 3; see also European External Action Service, 2016, p. 13). This suggests that the EU has not fully bought into a more pragmatic approach to peacebuilding or the kind of post-liberalism suggested by resilience discourse (Chandler, 2014). These contradictions were also reflected in the language of some of the officials. Hence while resilience meant that "we cannot impose our ways," the same official also stated that "the promotion of the EU's core values is intrinsic to resilience. If we do not respect these values, we won't be resilient" (#21). Other officials acknowledged, "we still care about broader values such as democracy, rule of law, human rights" (#22) and they had to "put democracy and people's rights first" (#29).

In sum, despite references to complexity, the EU's approach to resilience is a linear one where EU values constitute the end goals, even where these are mediated by stability and security concerns. The assessment of the implementation of the EUGS is clear in this regard: "These two priorities [resilience and the integrated approach] are not meant to replace the goals of democracy, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development and

peace. They are rather intended as complementary, not substitutive, priorities" (European External Action Service, 2019, p. 22).

Local ownership and human agency

The final point relates to the EU's commitment to local ownership and local agencies in EU peacebuilding. The EU's approach to resilience claims to help "partner countries" by promoting people-centered approaches (European Commission, 2013, p. 3; European External Action Service, 2016). This is specifically framed as capacity to adapt. For instance, the EU's toolkit for capacity development states that projects must be owned by those who seek to develop their capacity; "otherwise it [capacity building] simply does not happen" (European Commission, 2011, p. 9). In relation to security sector reform (SSR), the EU's strategic framework emphasizes the need for "nationally owned processes" (European Commission & High Representative, 2016, p. 7). Thus, resilience building initiatives must "include the participation of the people affected or at risk, of communities, governments and civil society" (European Commission, 2019). For instance, reflecting on the implementation of resilience, one EU official (#22) stated, "we need to understand that we need to work with the resources we find in these countries [...]. The thinking behind is one of shared responsibility. We need to move away from traditional donor-recipient country." Another official (#23) also emphasized the focus on local ownership and agency and the people-centre notion of resilience: "It means working with people, a bottom up approach, underpinned by a very strong analysis of their risks and vulnerabilities [...]. It is about more ownership and building local capacities."

Yet, the same official (#22) acknowledged that despite this commitment to "targeting individuals and communities ... the idea of resilience has more to do with resource constraints. There are more crises around the world and we need to do more, but there are less resources." This might explain the EU's shallow commitment to local ownership and agency as discussed in the next section. Other officials also mentioned that compared to the original development-driven 2012 resilience approach, the EUGS approach to resilience paid more attention to the state level and state actors despite and

that there might be some tensions between state and societal resilience (interviews #27, 28, 29).

In sum, the rhetoric of EU peacebuilding acknowledges the four key contributions made by resilience, although from this perspective, it is also clear that the emphasis is already on the need to foster an integrated approach between different actors and instruments for practical, but also existential reasons. There are basic existential reasons for this. Universal liberal values are part of the EU's self-understanding. The rhetoric of local ownership and agency also fits with the EU's normative power identity. There are also more straightforward institutional interests at stake meaning that new ideas like resilience end up being "translated" by older institutional features and path dependencies (Joseph & Juncos, 2019). As the resilience approach is translated by different actors, institutions, and narratives, it becomes less clearly a new paradigm for EU foreign policy and more an expression of the EU's own complex and multilevel structure. This is ironic given that resilience is seen as a way of developing a comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises when in fact causality is probably working in the other direction with the EU's understanding of resilience a product of internal differences and divisions. By engaging in the sort of resilience-building projects discussed below, the EU can instead, try to disguise such differences behind the projection of an integrated approach that everyone supposedly agrees upon.

Implementing the EU's resilience approach in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans is an ideal place to start examining whether resilience constitutes a new approach for the EU, fulfilling the characteristics of being a fragile region with a complex interplay of internal and external factors including weak social and economic structures, fragile democracy, corruption, and clientelism as well as obvious ethnic tensions that seriously test the EU's neighborhood policy.² A report on the EU's approach

to the region suggests that “nurturing state and societal resilience in the Western Balkans... [helps the EU in] addressing the region’s capacity to cope with those multiple challenges... [and] is also making a long-term investment in the interest of its own citizens” (Lange, Nechev, & Trauner 2017, p. 8). A European Parliament report also argues that “EU policy in the Western Balkans has shifted from one of stabilisation and containment to a much more ambitious policy of ‘positive peace’-building” (European Parliament, 2018, p. 1). This policy combines the EU’s security concerns about the neighborhood with strengthening its own self-identity as a progressive actor. That this is bound up with the accession process only further highlights the fact that this is about strengthening values. However, these values are a reflection of the EU’s deeper identity rather than something specific about resilience as can be seen the following passage from the Joint Communication:

The EU global strategy places a particular focus on resilience in the EU's neighbouring countries. This reflects the special political commitments of the accession process and the EU's neighbourhood policy; the close integration of our economies and societies; the interdependencies in our broad security interests; and the exposure that some of our neighbouring countries have to geopolitical rivalries. [...] At the core of this process is the "fundamentals first" approach, focusing on rule of law, human and fundamental rights, democratic institutions, including public administration reform, as well as economic reforms and competitiveness. (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, p. 14)

The "principled pragmatism" of the EUGS is reflected separately rather than conjointly, as geopolitical or realist pragmatism towards security issues and as longstanding EU principles that represent traditional approaches to peacebuilding—good governance, rule of law, market economies—rather than being a commitment to how resilience-building might come to see things differently. More specifically, these contradictions are also evident in the European Commission’s response to protests and discontent in the Western

Mostar in November 2016 with EU officials, Bosnian officials, and representatives from civil society organizations. Interviews are coded to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees.

Balkans with the relaunch of "a credible enlargement perspective" for the region, which is seen to be a "key driver of transformation in the region" and 'remains essential for fostering reconciliation and stability' (European Commission, 2018, p. 1). At his 2017 State of the Union address, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker specifically linked the need for "stability in our neighbourhood," with the need to "maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans," but he also added that in order to achieve that aim, "[a]ccession candidates must give the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights utmost priority in the negotiations." The EU-Western Balkans Summit, Sofia Declaration of 2018 also placed an emphasis on the need for partners to share European values and principles, while emphasizing shared security challenges (notably illegal migration, organized crime, resilience and cyber security) and the need for a market-friendly, investment-friendly environment. (European Council, 2018, pp. 1-2). These may or may not be relatively new, more complex challenges, but certainly the EU's discourse of common values is not new, while the specific difference that resilience-building makes is not evident. Thus, the EU's policy in the region continues to be one that pursues stability and security through the promotion of EU values and norms (for similar conclusion in the EU's Eastern policies, see Petrova & Delcour, 2019).

The three-year assessment of the EUGS provides more evidence that resilience has made little difference to the way the EU works in the region. According to this report, "[i]n the Balkans, alongside a reinvigorated European perspective, the EU has directly engaged in resilience-building in areas such as rule of law, economic development, employment and connectivity" (European External Action Service, 2019, p. 23). It would seem then that despite the resilience "turn," the EU's initiatives in the region remain unchanged. In the annex attached to the document illustrating how the EUGS has been implemented in the Western Balkans in "practice," it is explained how the focus has been on implementing the usual EU enlargement tools ("a strict and fair conditionality"), and that by re-energizing the EU's commitment to the enlargement perspective, this has led to "irreversible progress towards the EU." Threats to resilience in the Western Balkans include not only domestic vulnerabilities in the candidate countries (e.g. weak governance and rule of law structures), but the EU's failure to demonstrate a clear

commitment to the region's accession (European Commission, 2019, p. 2). Again, these are all well-established "truth" in the EU's enlargement approach, which remains unaltered after the adoption of the EUGS.

In order to better understand the EU's role in the region, we examine in more detail the case of Bosnia, which we see as emblematic of the EU's wider engagement in the Western Balkans and the way the EU has used member state-building as a strategy for peacebuilding (Juncos, 2012). When it comes to the implementation of resilience, this case shows that achieving integration of efforts has consumed a lot of the energy of EU peacebuilders, while there has been less attention to fostering local ownership and a more inclusive approach that respects and engages local agency in all its forms. We thus question whether the EU has been building "a genuine and inclusive positive peace" (European Parliament 2018, p. 1). This also undermines the idea that the EU is engaged in a new approach focused on building "resilient societies," drawing upon underlying societal or institutional strengths and resources, or "fostering societies better empowered to identify and solve their own problems" (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, p. 23). Instead, the EU's approach appears to be a combination of enlargement-driven conditionality (in the form of democracy, free markets and rule of law), plus advocating an "integrated approach."

Promoting an integrated approach

To a great extent, the obsession for coherence and ensuring an integrated approach goes back to the early stages of the EU's intervention in Bosnia when the EU adopted a Comprehensive Strategy for Bosnia Herzegovina (European Council, 2004), but has become a constant over the years. The EU's search for an integrated approach has less to do with a new understanding of complex social phenomena than with the multiplicity of EU and international actors and agendas in contemporary interventions. Bosnia is archetypal of a dense network of actors involved, including the Council of Europe, the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to mention a few. To this mix, one can add a vast number of nongovernmental organizations

and other bilateral donors (for example, EU member states). Thus, our interviewees often complained about problems of coordination on the ground due to the existence of a multitude of activities, launched at different stages and motivated by different rationales, which complicate overall efforts at ensuring resilience and capacity building. As summarized by an interviewee (#3), this is because “they are starting some projects in different phases from one another and they don’t really know what’s going on – what projects are implemented, what they have achieved so far” (see also interviews #2, #3, #6, #8, #11). While such problems are not specific to the EU, but affect other international actors, in the case of EU efforts in Bosnia, interviewees felt that these were hindered by the fragmentation of the EU’s presence on the ground (e.g. the Commission’s delegation, EU double-hatted Special Representative, and a military operation, EU Force Althea (EUFOR)).

Given these perceptions among EU officials, it is not surprising that a lot of energy and efforts have focused on promoting more coherence. But, even despite the EU’s commitment to a comprehensive/integrated approach problems persisted at the time of the interviews (November 2016). According to one interviewee (#4), “you don’t see much coherence in terms of policies towards Bosnia among EU Member States’ embassies.” Each member state might develop its own initiatives alongside those of the Commission, EU Special Representative, or EUFOR, but these are not always coordinated. Moreover, according to one interviewee, in the case of the EU’s activities in Bosnia, problems of institutional (in)coherence were still evident in the relations between the EU Special Representative and the EU Delegation despite the double-hatting arrangement. More specifically, he argued that “they don’t know what each other is doing, which programmes they’re working on, because their superiors are different and they’re sending information to their own departments in Brussels” (interview #3). For many interviewees, the turn to resilience provided an opportunity to solve some of these problems by encouraging more joint planning, joint programming, and implementation in the medium and the long term as envisaged by the Joint Communication on resilience (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, pp. 20-21).

Complexity (or the lack of engagement with it)

Complexity has also complicated the EU's peacebuilding activities in Bosnia. In particular, our analysis shows that the EU has failed to engage with social and political orders that cannot be captured by the kind of approaches that have so far been preferred by the EU. For instance, a recurrent theme mentioned by interviewees was the fragmentation of the political system in Bosnia itself, and a problem that is compounded by the legacies of war (interviews #4, #12). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the complex institutional set-up of the country as a result of the Dayton Agreement complicates the EU's peacebuilding activities in the country and attempts to build the capacities at the state level have often been rejected at the entity level, in particular by Bosnian Serbs (Interviews #2, #5, #6, #12). For instance, one interviewee explained, "you need to understand that the justice system in BiH is very fragmented, it is not a hierarchical system" (Interview #1). Despite this complexity, the EU's strategy continues to be one that pursues linear functional models of liberal intervention that adopt state-centric and functionalist approaches (Edmunds & Juncos, 2019).

This is also evident if one examines EU member statebuilding approaches over the past two decades or so. Despite Bosnia still being affected by the legacies of conflict, past EU initiatives have promoted a very narrow understanding of peacebuilding as institution building or so-called member statebuilding, while neglecting wider bottom-up initiatives or human-centered approaches (Belloni, 2020; Juncos, 2012). For instance, out of the 16 areas set out in the EU Feasibility Study (2003) which the country had to make progress towards, most of them focused on (state-centric) institution building: such as the development of a more effective government, public administration and judiciary at the state level. The establishment of a centralized police then became one of the key priorities of the EU in the country during the 2000s and when that failed and the EU Police Mission was closed down, the EU's military force in the country, EUFOR ALTHEA, launched its capacity-building programs for the Bosnian Army. Financially, institution-building was clearly a priority in Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) and of the follow-up Instrument for Pre-

Accession Assistance (IPA) (Bechev & Andreev, 2005). More significantly, according to Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Kostovicova, and Randazzo (2018), “the EU state-centric approach focused on institutional strengthening within distinctive policy domains (policy ‘silos’) has not been able to dislodge the informal networks which operate transinstitutionally and transnationally” (p. 23). This has had the effect of further undermining the EU’s peacebuilding activities in the country.

The rhetoric and practice of local ownership

The EU’s commitment to local ownership has not fared better. With the publication of the EUGS, the EU has continued to emphasize the principle of ownership. As stated in the 2018 Communication on Enlargement “[i]t is now up to the countries’ authorities, with the support of their societies, to take ownership and deliver on the well-known conditions for accession” (European Commission, 2018, p. 3). However, evidence of EU engagement in the Western Balkans and beyond suggests that the EU has been struggling to match its peacebuilding practice with its proclaimed principles. Deficient local ownership, one way or another, has been documented in both Bosnia and Kosovo where the EU is well known for its executive interventions and top down approaches (Tolksdorf, 2014; Vandemoortele, 2012; Kappler & Lemay-Hébert, 2016; Qehaja & Prezelj, 2017). In addition, in the case of Bosnia, for instance, it has been noted that EU peacebuilding interventions have struggled to involve nonstate actors, despite the country having a comparatively advanced civil society sector (Kappler & Richmond, 2011). As Balfour (2017, p. 20) notes, the EU’s engagement with the region needs to be far more dynamic and bottom-up. For all its promotion of “self-sustainability” the EU still falls back on externally-led interventions for fear of a reversion to old habits and prejudices.

Interviews with key stakeholders conducted at the end of 2016 raised the issue that, despite the EUGS rhetoric, EU programs were still launched without prior or appropriate knowledge of the local context or without the meaningful engagement of local partners. There were many complaints for not involving local stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of projects (interviews #3, #7, #11, #15). Most programs are conceived

overseas by external actors with their own ideas of what they want to do, regardless of what has been done in the past, what has worked, what has not and what the current needs are (interview #10). In the best case, this has resulted in duplication of activities, in the worst case, in the creation and perpetuation of initiatives that are not suited to local needs. Among the most notable concerns are the difficulties of developing close relationships with local actors and gaining local country knowledge when donor postings and projects may only be short term in nature such as in the case of military and civilian crisis management operations in the Balkans. For instance, Bosnian interviewees complained about the high rotational turnaround of international staff and the lack of local knowledge, including knowledge of the local language (interviews #3, #10, #11, #12).

Hence, a key lesson identified was the need to develop programs that meet local needs and avoid duplication. As one interviewee (#4) put it, “there is now an understanding that you have to adapt to local needs,” which “requires us to be in constant communication with local partners. Now we don’t just give local partners what they ask for, but we also make sure what they are asking for aligns with our general objectives and theirs, too.” Several interviewees mentioned that, to achieve this, a best practice is for one to establish and/or run needs assessments prior to the launch of the programs, consultations with local actors, as well as monitoring and evaluation systems (interviews #3, #4, #14).

Human agency and local capacities

Last, but not least, problems implementing local ownership are intrinsically related to the way the EU understands capacity and agency (or the lack of) in Bosnia (see also Edmunds & Juncos, 2019). According to Bojicic-Dzelilovic *et al.* (2018), problems in the Balkans have usually been associated with poor capacity, “thus calling for further reinforcement of mechanisms that monitor, support and enhance said capacity” (p. 17). And while both local and international actors recognize an improvement in the capacities of Bosnian partners (usually through the idea of becoming a "security provider" rather than a "security recipient"), there are still deeply in-grained ideas about the lack of

capacity at the local level. For instance, when it comes to supporting security sector reform in Bosnia, “this means *starting from scratch* [emphasis added] because you have the police who were militarised during the war [...] And you need some new arrangements in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreements, because now you have to establish common institutions at the state level” (interview #3).

This problematization of capacity deficits at the local level plays a key role in legitimizing various forms of externally-driven EU resilience building initiative. It presents the host environment as either an empty shell waiting to be filled (Lemay-Hébert, 2011) or a dysfunctional space in need of correction. Either of these conceptions are in contradiction with the ideas underpinning resilience building approaches. They go against the fourth contribution of resilience highlighted earlier, which is to emphasize human agency and the capacities of local people. This is despite the Joint Communication calling for a people-centered and development-oriented approach that fosters self-reliance and enables people to live in dignity as contributors to their society (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, p.11).

Resilience, stability, and principled pragmatism in Bosnia

As discussed above, the new "resilience turn" at the EU seems to have made little mark on the EU's enlargement policies in the Balkans and in Bosnia, specifically. Of the four features, resilience has only translated into a *continued* focus on the implementation of the integrated approach, while the EU has largely neglected the added value of complexity thinking and deeper understandings of local ownership and local capacities. In his study of EU peacebuilding in the Western Balkans, Belloni (2020) agrees that "while resilience [...] still does not have a clear policy impact on the Balkans, 'principled pragmatism' has an intuitive appeal among policy-makers that makes it immediately relevant" (p. 235). In line with principled pragmatism, the EU has sought to achieve a difficult balance between stability and principles. Yet, while the rhetoric continues to put "fundamental values" at the core of the enlargement process, in practice, many observers have argued that stability, and the support for stabilitocrats has driven EU policy in the

2010s (Džankić, Keil, & Kmezić, 2018). Thus, Belloni (2020, p. 235) concludes that principled pragmatism has led to the "sidelining of transformative ambitions" and that in countries like Bosnia this has meant that "stabilization prevailed over emancipation or transformation" (also Cooley, 2019). As long as semi-authoritarian elites continue to maintain stability and security for the EU (in the form of border control, counter-terrorism and dealing with refugees), the potential of the "resilience turn" will remain unfulfilled (Stratulat, 2017).

Conclusion

While the EU continues to acknowledge the links between the enlargement policy and peacebuilding and despite the EUGS' turn to resilience, resilience does not feature much, or at all, in EU enlargement documents (European Commission, 2019b, p. 8). Taking the four features of resilience (complexity, a systems approach, local ownership, and human capacity) as yardsticks to determine the extent to which the EU has incorporated resilience thinking into its peacebuilding activities, this article also concludes that the promise of resilience remains unfulfilled. Conceptually, we have argued that resilience seeks to address what it means to live with complexity and an uncertain world. It does this through making a positive appeal to our unique human qualities and our ability to withstand, adapt and even thrive in the face of adversity. In looking at how we cope with new challenges, resilience theories point to certain intangible human powers and resources that make us resilient beings. However, we found that this aspect of resilience thinking was entirely absent from EU understandings of resilient peacebuilding in the Balkans and is barely mentioned in the EUGS.

The turn to human agency is something that has gained traction in other approaches to peacebuilding and development, most notably in arguments for the capabilities approach and the turn to the everyday practices of local communities. With a resilience approach, we might see human capacities or capabilities in terms of resourcefulness, self-understanding, awareness, reflexivity and the capacity to learn from experience. Most of all, it is the unique human ability to cope with challenges, something

that cannot be captured by a purely instrumental logic. However, this is absent from the strategic understanding of the EU. Nor is there much more on the other characteristic of resilience that we identified--the shift to local capacities. This is largely absent from the EU's approach despite the peacebuilding literature constantly emphasizing the importance of local engagement and working through civil society and despite the Western Balkans' civil society being fairly vibrant.

If the EU's approach to building resilience in places like Bosnia fails to engage the key issues of local ownership and human agency despite some mention in the policy documents, then at least it makes more reference to complexity in its arguments in support of a new approach. In some arguments, the EU appears to adopt a complex systems approach which "requires a proper understanding of the linkages between different parts of the complex systems that govern and sustain states, societies and communities, as well as of how they respond when faced with sudden-onset shocks, recurrent or long-term stresses" (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, p. 27). However, most of the time, complexity just means complicated as in things like globalization, climate change, demographic challenges, economic shocks, and other processes beyond the power of individual states to confront, or else it means that the EU must deal with multiple actors with competing agendas. The Western Balkans are a classic case of somewhere that is complicated, a place where chronic vulnerability and fragility exacerbate the impact of these pressures (European Commission & High Representative, 2017, p. 3). Moreover, we noted that any new ideas about dealing with complexity in a more pragmatic and innovative way soon give way to the EU's normal focus on "core values" like democracy, rights, and rule of law.

This is because maintaining the EU's core identity is in conflict with some of the arguments for resilience--notably it represents a clash with the universal liberalism of past peacebuilding endeavors. But while this might also be a concern raised in relation to the peacebuilding approaches of other international organizations, what we highlight above all else in this article is the EU's obsession with an integrated approach. Indeed, resilience theory's emphasis on a systems approach has given way to an EU

interpretation of what is "systematic" in its own actions. The divisions between its different departments and internal actors as well as its work with other international organizations and actors and the need to combine different strategies and interests are the main driving force behind the EUGS and its resilience turn. While our focus here has been on peacebuilding in the Western Balkans, we can say that this approach is indicative of a wider strategy as represented in the EUGS.

Trying to work out what resilience is meant to be doing is difficult at the best of times. Trying to apply it to peacebuilding is even more challenging. Having identified four promising areas where a different understanding can be developed, we saw that few aspects of these were properly developed in the EU's approach. The dominance of an integrated approach is to the detriment of developing a proper understanding of what resilience might do differently. In fact, by the end, we know more about how the EU deals with its own weaknesses than how it wants to help strengthen others.

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